

The King Range from Black Smith Beach

## Prepared for the Weather?

The King Range has cool, wet winters, and warm, dry summers. The abrupt wall of coastal peaks wrings moisture from winter storms, making the area one of the wettest in the U.S. Annual rainfall totals commonly exceed 100 inches, and top 200 inches during the wettest years. Snow intermittently covers the higher peaks, while the coastline rarely sees frost. Sunny weather excursions are still possible during breaks between storms, but keep a close eye on the forecast, especially if you venture into the back country. Larger storms often arrive in a series and bring pulses of heavy rain and wind that continue for a week or more. Please contact the BLM to report washouts, fallen trees or other storm damage you encounter.

During summer, cool foggy marine air constantly vies with hot dry inland winds to control the weather. Cool marine air often covers the beach keeping temperatures in the 60s. At the same time the peaks are warm and dry with temperatures in the 80s and 90s. However, there are lots of days when the hot air reaches the beach, and others when the marine air reaches the crest. It's best to prepare for rapid weather changes by bringing several clothing layers. Always carry rain gear on extended hikes. Summer winds along the ridge tops and coast are often very strong and erratic. Choose a sheltered camping spot and secure your tent and belongings.

■ **ROADS** here are steep and winding so if you have a large trailer or motor home, plan to stay near Shelter Cove, Ferndale, or along the U.S. 101 corridor. Unpaved roads are normally accessible to passenger cars but may become slippery during winter rains. Unimproved roads should only be attempted with a high clearance vehicle (4WD Recommended). Use low gears on downhill grades as they are "brake burners".

■ **SIGNS** are limited to keep the area rustic, so carry this brochure or another detailed map.

■ **PETS** are allowed on a leash in developed sites such as campgrounds. At other locations, you may let pets off-leash, but must keep them in sight and under control. Beach hiking here can be very hard on dogs' feet.

■ **RECREATION USE PERMITS** are required for all commercial outfitters and organized groups such as scouts and school groups.

■ **FIRE PERMITS** are required for campfires, stoves and grills used anywhere other than developed campgrounds. Obtain one at any BLM, U.S. Forest Service or California Department of Forestry (CDF) office. Backcountry campfires are prohibited for much of the summer and fall due to high wild fire danger, so bring a stove for cooking. To prevent wild fires, make sure your fire is dead out (cold to your touch) whenever you leave camp. Do not build fires near driftwood.



Interpretive signs at Mal Coombs Park.

## Know Before You Go

Fern-shrouded streams, ancient forests, and windswept golden prairies cascade onto black sand beaches backed by weathered cliffs. A wall of mountains thrusts 4,000 feet above the ocean in a precipitous rise unsurpassed on the west coast. Mountains and shore are sculpted by heavy rains, earthquakes, and the unrelenting Pacific Ocean. The King Range National Conservation Area is truly a spectacular meeting of land and sea.

The King Range covers 60,000 acres and extends along 35 miles of Northern California coastline. Here the landscape was too rugged for highway building, forcing State Highway 1 and U.S. 101 inland. Thus, the area became known as California's Lost Coast.

■ **COLLECTING** a few rock, leaf, flower or pine cone specimens for your own use is OK. Please take only what you need. You will need a permit for mushroom collecting and for commercial collecting of any material in the King Range.

■ **GROUP SIZE** should be kept small. The developed campsites and backcountry camping locations are not set up to accommodate larger groups. Groups of up to 6 people are best.

■ **DON'T LET WEED SEEDS HITCHHIKE**, they can spread rapidly and wreck the Lost Coast ecology. Many weed seeds are "barbs" that love to attach to your shoelaces and socks. Take care to clean your clothing, vehicle, trailer and animals before you leave home. Stock users should bring along processed feed pellets, not hay.



Lost Coast Trail backpacking on the beach.

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## Supplies and Services

Gasoline, groceries and other necessities are available in Shelter Cove, Honeydew and Petrolia. Shelter Cove and Petrolia also have a couple of restaurants. Business hours are limited in these rural communities, especially in winter. The Garberville-Redway and Ferndale-Fortuna areas have a wide variety of traveler services.



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## The Loneliest Lighthouses

### Punta Gorda

Early mariners dreaded this area's dangerous shoals and high winds. Many ships went down here, so a lighthouse was constructed in 1912. Lightkeepers did not look forward to duty at isolated and lonely Punta Gorda, and it soon earned the reputation of being the "Alcatraz" of lighthouses. No electric lines ever connected it to the outside world, and fierce winds and flooded streams kept it cut off from civilization for much of the winter. Punta Gorda shined for the last time in 1950.



Punta Gorda Lighthouse

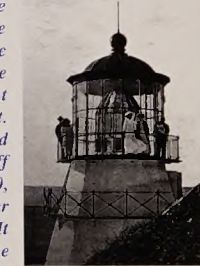
Pacific. A lighthouse site was carved into the cape 400 feet above the surf in 1868. The conditions for the lightkeepers here were brutal. Near constant gales and frequent earthquakes literally shook their homes apart. They tied themselves to cables stretched between the buildings to keep from blowing off the cliffs. The lighthouse, abandoned in 1950, stood on the cape until 1998, tilting farther towards the ocean with each earthquake. It was rescued and relocated by the Cape Mendocino Lighthouse Preservation Society in 1999, and can now be viewed in Mal Coombs Park.



Lightkeepers at Punta Gorda

### Cape Mendocino

California's westernmost and tallest headland has been a major navigation landmark since Spanish Galleons first plied the



Cape Mendocino Lighthouse

## Camping and Lodging

The King Range is unique because it represents one of the few coastlines in America where human impacts are light. For this reason, most of the coastal slope has been designated as a Wilderness Study Area. The BLM is managing this part of the King Range to preserve its wilderness values while Congress determines if it should become a permanent part of our National Wilderness Preservation System.

You can choose from seven public campgrounds in the King Range. Beginning in the south, Wailaki and Nadelos offer sites in a deep cool valley surrounded by stately old-growth Douglas-fir trees. Tolkan and Horse Mountain are on secluded ridge top areas and are ideal if you like to be away from it all.



Wailaki Campground

Moving north, Honeydew Creek offers stream-side camping while A.W. Way County Park has sites along the Mattole River. Mattole has sites on a windswept beach. Each campground offers tables, fire-rings, water (may need to be filtered or boiled at some sites) and restrooms. You can camp on BLM public lands for a total of two weeks per calendar year. All sites are filled on a first-come-first-served basis, except Nadelos which may be reserved for group use.

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## Watchable Wildlife

The grasslands, chaparral, forests and coastline provide habitat for lots of different animals. Here are some of the top spots to see them.

■ **Birds** -- Nearly 300 species of native and migratory birds make the King Range a bird watchers' paradise. The coastline offers some of the best viewing. The offshore rocks are home to Cormorants, Brown Pelicans and Common Murres. All can be viewed from Mal Coombs Park. The Mattole River estuary is also a bird magnet.



Viewing sea lions

■ **Marine Mammals** -- Harbor Seals and Steller Sea Lions regularly haul out onto offshore rocks at Seal Rock, Mal Coombs Park, and just north of the Mouth of the Mattole River. Look offshore anywhere along the coast for the geyser-like spouting of mist by Grey Whales migrating from Alaska to Mexico and back (December through mid May).



Roosevelt Elk at Hidden Valley.

■ **Roosevelt Elk** -- These largest of North American elk subspecies can often be seen at Hidden Valley and Needle Rock.

Watch quietly, see more - Deer, quail, foxes, River Otters, Black Bears and the rarely seen Mountain Lion live throughout the King Range. To optimize your wildlife viewing opportunities, be very quiet and avoid sudden movements. If an animal seems disturbed by your presence, back away. Binoculars are very helpful, and early morning and late evening are the best viewing times.

## Nature On The Fast Track

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Big Flat and the King Range crest

**A land in motion** -- Imagine standing on King Peak as the ground under your feet thrusts 3 feet higher in a matter of seconds. This happened in the 1992 Petrolia earthquake, which also left coastal tidepools high and dry. The

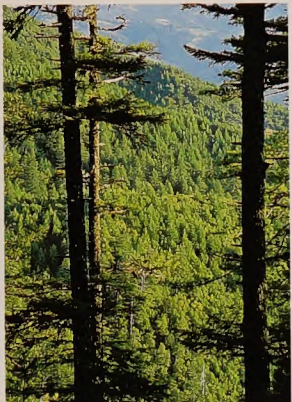
King Range is in one of the most active earthquake zones in North America. Three of the giant plates that make up the earth's crust grind together just offshore. The area rises about ten feet every thousand years. The shore being forced upward from the ocean floor has built some of the youngest landforms in America. As the mountains build, opposing forces waste no time in grinding them down. Heavy rains and earthquakes fracture and tear off chunks of the mountains. Mud, rock and trees plummet into the streams, whose rushing flood waters quickly deliver them to the ocean.



Winter storm waves, Black Sands Beach

**The Pacific takes and gives** -- Winter storm waves 20-30 feet high bash and undercut the base of the mountains, causing still more massive landslides. The waves immediately go to work grinding the rock into the grey and black sand characteristic of the Lost Coast. The sand soon settles onto the floor of the Pacific, beginning the rock forming and mountain building cycle anew.

The same waters that wear away the coastline also serve as its greatest source of nourishment. The ocean here is very cold, normally hovering between 45 and 55 degrees. Northerly currents keep the sea in constant motion, forcing deep cold waters to the surface in a process called upwelling. The cold water from the ocean depths gives life. It is loaded with nutrients and continually supplies the plants, fish and other animals in the coastal waters with food. On the immediate shore, tidepools brim with crabs, anemones and other curious creatures, while offshore, sea lions, salmon, Great White Sharks and Orcas cruise the waters. Many land animals depend on the coastal riches for food, look for their tracks along the beach.



Old growth Douglas-fir forest

you will notice brushy chaparral and young madrone and Tanoak trees growing among the ghostly grey fire-killed trees. These resilient plants indicate a land that has been recently charred by fires.

Only the creek bottoms and some north-facing slopes are moist and stable enough to grow ancient forests of stately Douglas-fir. Some of these trees are over 200 feet tall with trunks 6 feet in diameter. The old-growth forests protect and cool stream corridors which are home for spawning salmon and Spotted Owls.

North of Honeydew and Spanish Creek large expanses of prairie intermingle with the forest. These prairies put on some of the area's most spectacular wildflower displays. The forests, chaparral, sand dunes and cliffs each have their own unique displays. Peak wildflower viewing times are April through June, although plants bloom somewhere here throughout much of the year.



"Redwood Lily"  
Lilium rubescens

## Traces Of The Past

Native Americans lived off the Lost Coast's bounty for thousands of years. The Sinkiyone and Mattole people improved yields of food, medicine and other materials by carefully setting fires, pruning, tilling, and limiting their harvests. Settlers first moved into the region in the 1850's. The Mattole and Sinkiyone people fared poorly in competing with these newcomers. In a little over a decade, they had been killed, died of disease, or forced to move to reservations. The only remaining evidence of their once flourishing cultures are the mounds of discarded shells and fish and animal bones found along the coast. These are called middens. Look and imagine, but don't touch or remove anything from these sites. You can see several middens with interpretive displays along the Lost Coast Trail about a quarter mile south of the Mattole Recreation Site.



Sinkiyone, twine basket

Ranching was the economic back-bone of the area for many years, but a number of other industries also developed. Local residents drilled California's first oil well in 1865 in the lower Mattole Valley, giving the town of Petrolia its name. Oil was shipped to market, but quality and volume were low and the industry soon died. Bark peelers cut and shipped "tanbark" to San Francisco for the leather industry. Tanbark wagon teamsters gave Nooning Creek its name. They stopped here for lunch before plugging down the brake-burning hill to Shelter Cove. Commercial fishing reached its peak in Shelter Cove in the early 1900s, and a small fleet still uses the cove as home port.



Hauling tanbark

The vast Douglas-fir forests of the Mattole Valley were overlooked for many years as loggers focused on the more valuable redwoods. A lumber boom finally occurred in the 1950's and 60's. The latest wave of migration to the area occurred in the 60's and 70's. Much of the cut-over land was subdivided and sold to "back-to-landers" from San Francisco and other urban areas who moved here to pursue simpler more self-sufficient life-styles.

## Touring Adventures

If you like slowing down and exploring winding back roads, the Lost Coast has some spectacular routes. Here is a sampling:

Take Smith-Etter Road to climb the spine of the King Range and catch endless vistas of mountains and coastline. Saddle Mountain and Paradise Ridge Roads offer similar "top of the world" views (High clearance or 4WD only).

The Ettersburg, Wilder Ridge and Mattole Roads pack in lots of variety. The route takes you along the eastside of the King Range, through the pastoral Mattole Valley and on to the windswept beaches of the northern Lost Coast. A short side trip leads to a picture-postcard beach at the mouth of the Mattole River. Rounding inland at Cape Mendocino, you can continue on to the historic Victorian village of Ferndale (Passenger car).



Above: Mattole Beach

The Chemise Mountain Road and Bear Harbor Road traverse dark Douglas-fir forests before dropping to grassy bluffs perched above the Pacific at Needle Rock. You can access several hiking trails and look for Roosevelt Elk along the way (Passenger car).

All roads are also open to mountain bike use, with Paradise Ridge and Saddle Mountain providing challenging and rewarding rides.

Remember to TREAD LIGHTLY on the Lost Coast. Stay on existing roads and please do not drive cross-country.

## Tidepooling - Visit Life on the Edge

Want to walk on the bottom of the ocean? Visit the Intertidal Zone, that in-between area that is under water at high tide but accessible at low tide. Rocky shorelines have depressions called tide pools that remain filled with water at low tide. These pools are nature's aquariums and are home to a colorful array of sea life.



Guided tidepool tour

Imagine spending part of the day in the hot sun, part underneath chilly water, and yet another few hours being bashed by waves! That's life in a tidepool.



Tidepooled life

Intertidal animals and plants are specially equipped to live in these harsh and ever changing conditions. For example, mussels attach themselves to rocks by secreting threads that are stronger than steel. "Seaweeds" have a slippery coating that keeps them wet while they are out of the water.

**Take care of tidepools** -- Walk on bare rock or sand. This provides for better footing and will keep you from crushing tide pool life. View animals and plants from the water's edge and please refrain from picking up or disturbing the critters. Plan your explorations for low tides. Mal Coombs Park offers some of the best tidepools.

## Fishing

Waters off the Lost Coast provide some of the best saltwater angling in Northern California. A mix of rocky shoals and sandy bottoms provide homes for rockfish,



Boats moored at Shelter Cove

salmon, halibut, perch, bottom fish and abalone. Shelter Cove has a marina, boat launch and charter boat fishing service. All freshwater streams within the King Range are closed to fishing to protect Steelhead Trout and salmon.

## Hunting

Many game animals live in the King Range, but hunting success is only fair due to the steep slopes, heavy vegetation, and hunting pressure. Game species include deer, bear, quail, Grey Squirrels and Blue Grouse. Many other visitors are in the backcountry during hunting season, so be careful, especially near road, trail and recreation site locations. Please obtain landowner permission before crossing private land. Public land boundaries are not marked.

## Take Care of Yourself

■ **SEARCHAND RESCUE** in the backcountry can take many hours. Be prepared with proper clothing, food and a first aid kit. Please sign in at trail registers and let a friend or family member know your itinerary.

■ **WATCH THE OCEAN** as not all waves are equal. Sets of larger waves can wash far up the beach with tremendous force.

■ **POISON OAK, TICKS AND RATTLESNAKES** are common here. Learn to recognize and avoid them. All three can be found anywhere in the King Range, including the beach.

■ **INFORMATION KIOSKS** at all BLM trailheads and recreation sites provide more detailed safety and orientation information. Please check them for updated conditions.

### Accessibility

Wailaki, Nadelos, Tolkan, and Honeydew Creek Recreation Sites have been recently reconstructed and are accessible to visitors with disabilities. For specific information on the accessibility of facilities and programs call: 707-825-2300.

The information contained in this brochure is available in electronic, large print, braille, audio, and Spanish language formats. Please allow ten working days to process your request.



"Columbine"  
Aquilegia formosa



Graphics by Mry Wababayashi  
Photos by Bob Wick (unless noted)

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LOST COAST

**KING RANGE**  
NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

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DENVER, COLORADO 80225

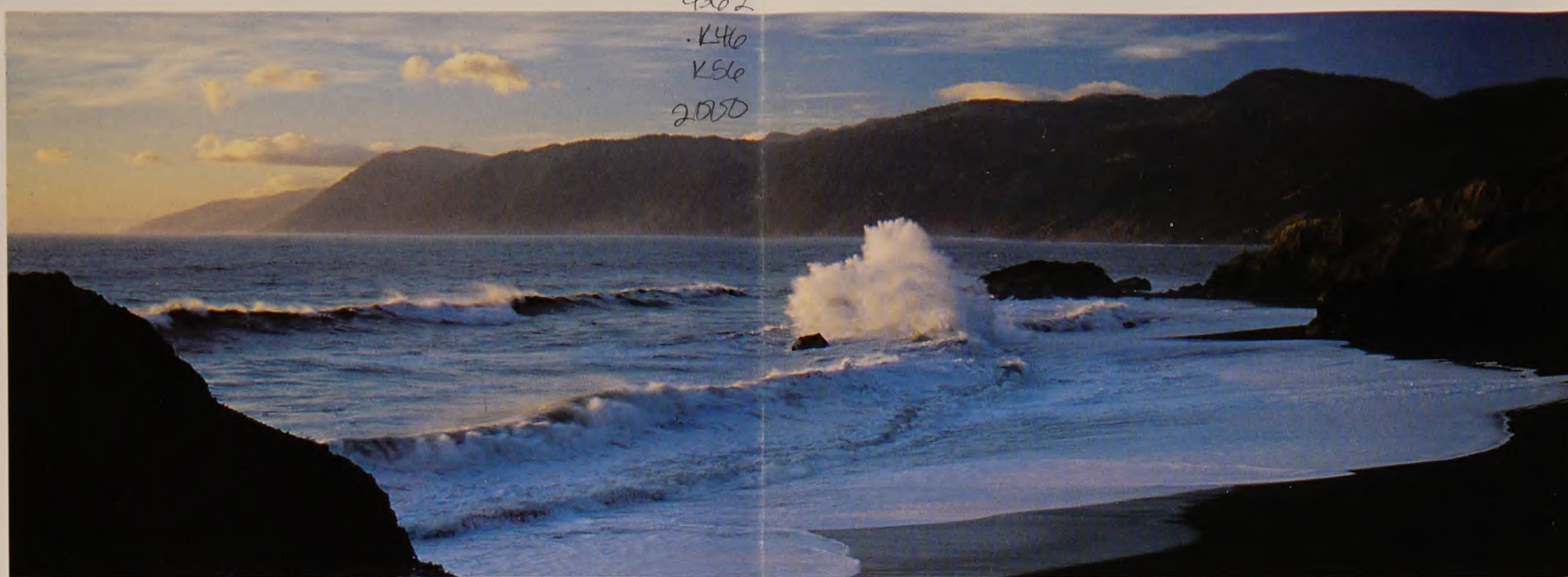
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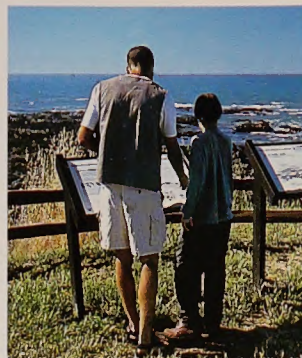
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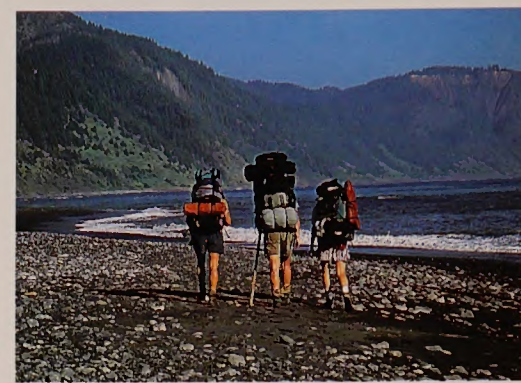
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Old growth Douglas-fir forest

**Where are the Redwoods?** -- The King Range is located in the heart of the Redwood Empire. However, while the neighboring valleys and coastline are bathed in the cool summer fog that redwoods need, the King Range itself is too hot and dry then. The positioning of the mountains, coast, and the Mattole River Valley combine to funnel hot, dry inland winds over the peaks, often blowing the fog out to sea. The dry winds also make this area very prone to wild fires. Look at the ridge-tops and you

will notice brushy chaparral and young madrone and Tanoak trees growing among the ghostly grey fire-killed trees. These resilient plants indicate a land that has been recently charred by fires.

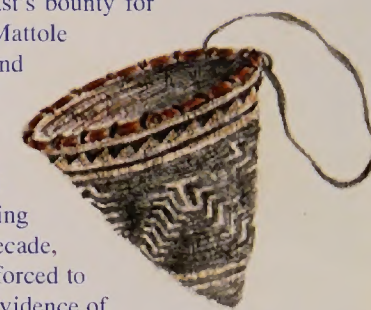
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# The King Range, California's Lost Coast

and is still only accessed by a few winding back roads. To appreciate a visit here, you must get off the highway and slow down for awhile. Campers, hunters and equestrians test their skills in the mountains, while the coast lures anglers, surfers, and beachcombers to name a few. Winding mountain roads beckon to explorers, while over 80 miles of trails challenge hikers and backpackers.

Congress first recognized the special qualities of the King Range in the 1920's and mandated that it be held in public ownership for the American people. In 1970 Congress designated the area as the nation's first National Conservation Area, to be managed and protected by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

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### Punta Gorda

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Lightkeepers at Punta Gorda

Mary Buckliff-Etter collection

Today, you can view the light tower and oil storage house by hiking 3.5 miles south along the beach from the Mattole Recreation Site. During the winter hikers must wade across Fourmile Creek.

### Cape Mendocino

California's westernmost and tallest headland has been a major navigation landmark since Spanish Galleons first plied the



Punta Gorda Lighthouse

Pacific. A lighthouse site was carved into the cape 400 feet above the surf in 1868. The conditions for the lightkeepers here were brutal. Near constant gales and frequent earthquakes literally shook their homes apart. They tied themselves to cables stretched between the buildings to keep from blowing off the cliffs. The lighthouse, abandoned in 1950, stood on the cape until 1998, tilting further towards the ocean with each earthquake. It was rescued and relocated by the Cape Mendocino Lighthouse Preservation Society in 1999, and can now be viewed in Mal Coombs Park.



Cape Mendocino Lighthouse

Cape Mendocino Lighthouse Preservation Society

## Watchable Wildlife

The grasslands, chaparral, forests and coastline provide habitat for lots of different animals. Here are some of the top spots to see them.

■ Birds -- Nearly 300 species of native and migratory birds make the King Range a bird watchers's paradise. The coastline offers some of the best viewing. The offshore rocks are home to Cormorants, Brown Pelicans and Common Murres. All can be viewed from Mal Coombs Park. The Mattole River estuary is also a bird magnet.



Viewing sea lions.

■ Marine Mammals -- Harbor Seals and Steller Sea Lions regularly haul out onto offshore rocks at Seal Rock, Mal Coombs Park, and just north of the Mouth of the Mattole River. Look offshore anywhere along the coast for the geyser-like spouting of mist by Grey Whales migrating from Alaska to Mexico and back (December through mid May).

■ Roosevelt Elk -- These largest of North American elk subspecies can often be seen at Hidden Valley and Needle Rock.



Roosevelt Elk at Hidden Valley.

### Watch quietly, see more -

Deer, quail, foxes, River Otters, Black Bears and the rarely seen Mountain Lion live throughout the King Range. To optimize your wildlife viewing opportunities, be very quiet and avoid sudden movements. If an animal seems disturbed by your presence, back away. Binoculars are very helpful, and early morning and late evening are the best viewing times.



## Touring Adventures

If you like slowing down and exploring winding back roads, the Lost Coast has some spectacular routes. Here is a sampling:

Take Smith-Etter Road to climb the spine of the King Range and catch endless vistas of mountains and coastline. Saddle Mountain and Paradise Ridge Roads offer similar "top of the world" views (High clearance or 4WD only).

The Ettersburg, Wilder Ridge and Mattole Roads pack in lots of variety. The route takes you along the eastside of the King Range, through the pastoral Mattole Valley and on to the windswept beaches of the northern Lost Coast. A short side trip leads to a picture-postcard beach at the mouth of the Mattole River. Rounding inland at Cape Mendocino, you can continue on to the historic Victorian village of Ferndale (Passenger car).



Above Mattole Beach

The Chemise Mountain Road and Bear Harbor Road traverse dark Douglas-fir forests before dropping to grassy bluffs perched above the Pacific at Needle Rock. You can access several hiking trails and look for Roosevelt Elk along the way (Passenger car).

All roads are also open to mountain bike use, with Paradise Ridge and Saddle Mountain providing challenging and rewarding rides.

Remember to TREAD LIGHTLY on the Lost Coast. Stay on existing roads and please do not drive cross-country.

## Tidepooling - Visit Life on the Edge

Want to walk on the bottom of the ocean? Visit the Intertidal Zone, that in-between area that is under water at high tide but accessible at low tide. Rocky shorelines have depressions called tide pools that remain filled with water at low tide. These pools are nature's aquariums and are home to a colorful array of sea life.



Guided tidepool tour

Intertidal animals and plants are specially equipped to live in these harsh and ever changing conditions. For example, mussels attach themselves to rocks by secreting threads that are stronger than steel. "Seaweeds" have a slippery coating that keeps them wet while they are out of the water.



Tidepool life

**Take care of tidepools --** Walk on bare rock or sand. This provides for better footing and will keep you from crushing tide pool life. View animals and plants from the water's edge and please refrain from picking up or disturbing the critters. Plan your explorations for low tides. Mal Coombs Park offers some of the best tidepools.

Imagine spending part of the day in the hot sun, part underneath chilly water, and yet another few hours being bashed by waves! That's life in a tidepool.

## Fishing

Waters off the Lost Coast provide some of the best saltwater angling in Northern California. A mix of rocky shoals and sandy bottoms provide homes for rockfish,



Boats moored at Shelter Cove

salmon, halibut, perch, bottom fish and abalone. Shelter Cove has a marina, boat launch and charter boat fishing service. All freshwater streams within the King Range are closed to fishing to protect Steelhead Trout and salmon.

## Hunting

Many game animals live in the King Range, but hunting success is only fair due to the steep slopes, heavy vegetation, and hunting pressure. Game species include deer, bear, quail, Grey Squirrels and Blue Grouse. Many other visitors are in the backcountry during hunting season, so be careful, especially near road, trail and recreation site locations. Please obtain landowner permission before crossing private land. Public land boundaries are not marked.



## Take Care of Yourself

- **SEARCH AND RESCUE** in the backcountry can take many hours. Be prepared with proper clothing, food and a first aid kit. Please sign in at trail registers and let a friend or family member know your itinerary.
- **WATCH THE OCEAN** as not all waves are equal. Sets of larger waves can wash far up the beach with tremendous force.
- **POISON OAK, TICKS AND RATTLESNAKES** are common here. Learn to recognize and avoid them. All three can be found anywhere in the King Range, including the beach.
- **INFORMATION KIOSKS** at all BLM trailheads and recreation sites provide more detailed safety and orientation information. Please check them for updated conditions.

### Accessibility

Wailaki, Nadelos, Tolkan, and Honeydew Creek Recreation Sites have been recently reconstructed and are accessible to visitors with disabilities. For specific information on the accessibility of facilities and programs call: 707-825-2300.

The information contained in this brochure is available in electronic, large print, braille, audio, and Spanish language formats. Please allow ten working days to process your request.



"Columbine"  
*Aquilegia formosa*

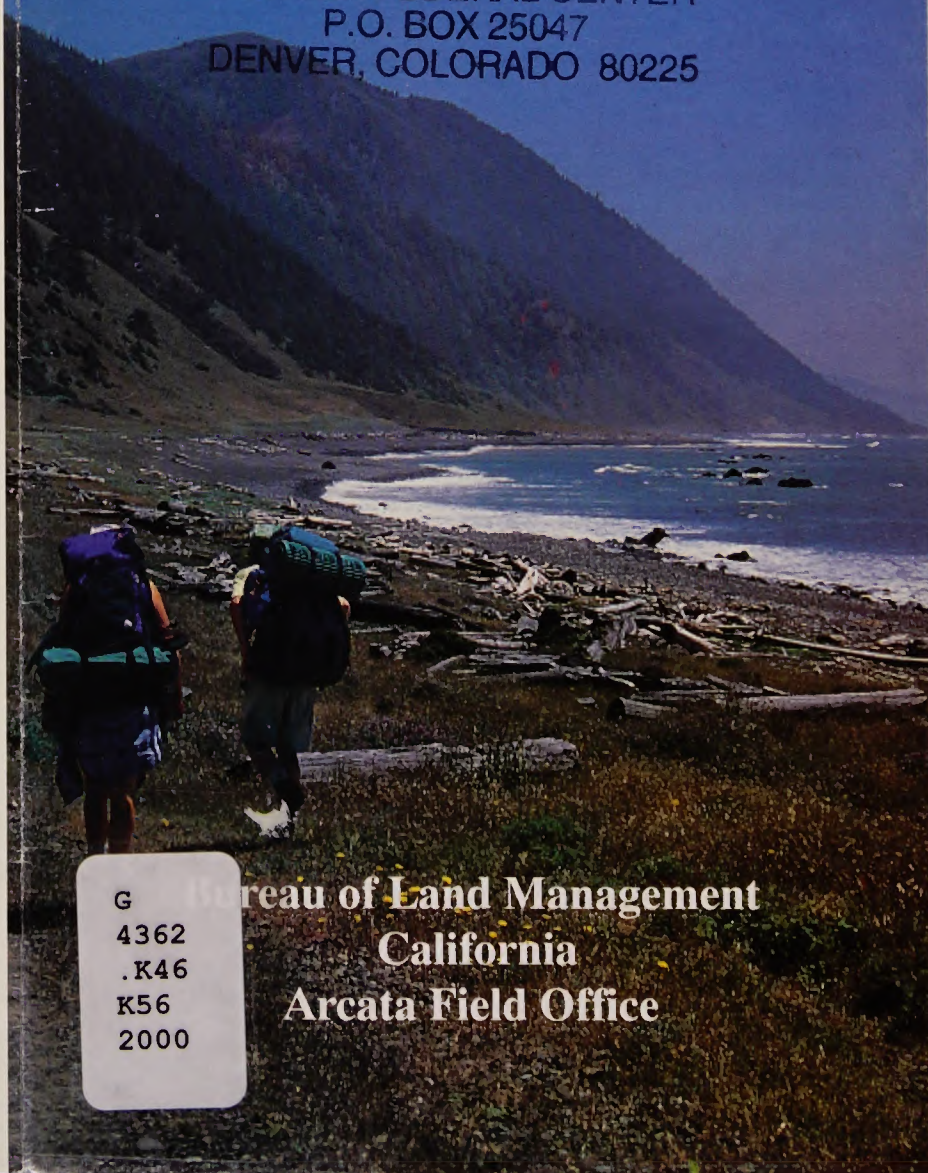


Graphics by May Wakabayashi  
Photos by Bob Wick (unless noted)

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Arcata Field Office





THE LOST COAST  
KING RANGE  
NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

From Summit to Sea, Back Country Trails...

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Buck Creek Trail

From the Saddle Mountain Trailhead, this trail skirts the fire-scarred summit of Saddle Mountain before descending a knee-jarring 3,290 feet to the beach. The top portion of the trail traverses dry, brushy ridges with sweeping vistas of the coastline to the south. The route then snakes through an area of gnarled, grey trees burned by the 1990 forest fires, before dropping into glen-like groves with a lush undergrowth of grass, iris, and fern. The trail pours onto the beach at the mouth of Buck Creek, a scenic and very popular camping spot. The mouth of Buck Creek is the only water source on this trail.

Kinsey Ridge Trail

This trail offers access into the very center of the Lost Coast. Starting at the Kinsey Ridge Trailhead, the route follows an old road to the beach, dropping 2,450 feet. You will pass mostly through forests, but a number of openings provide great views of Big Flat and the adjoining wall of peaks. No water is available along this trail.

Spanish Ridge Trail

If you are seeking a quiet trek with wide-open vistas, this trail is a great choice. From the Spanish Ridge Trailhead, the route follows a two-track road along a ridge line. The trail then makes a sharp left onto grass-covered Spanish Ridge. The ridge extends out far enough to offer dramatic vistas that are so exposed you will feel like you're looking down on the coast from a plane. In the foreground, individual trees are sculpted into odd shapes by the area's high winds, standing in sharp contrast to the surrounding golden grasslands. After a 2,400-foot drop, the trail meets up with the Lost Coast Trail at Spanish Flat. No water is available along this trail.



Crossing Randall Creek, Lost Coast Trail

Rattlesnake Ridge Trail

This extremely challenging but rewarding route plunges 3,500 feet from the King Range Crest to the coast. Beginning at the coast north of Big Flat Creek, you follow the creek until reaching the first major fork. From here, follow the south fork of the creek. This lower section of trail changes each year with winter floods and downed trees, so you may have to do some rock-hopping and bushwhacking along the wide creek channel. The sheltered valley is lush, with ferns and mosses covering the rocks and trees. Leaving the creek canyon, you climb up a seemingly endless series of switchbacks until reaching the fire-scarred brushy nose of Rattlesnake Ridge. Here the vistas open, with King Peak looming above and the broad outwash of Big Flat Creek below. You'll find a spring and flat area for tents at Bear Hollow Camp before the route reaches the King Crest Trail.

Cooskie Creek and Cooskie Spur Trail

Cooskie Creek Trail will refresh you with solitude and limitless vistas as you pass through golden grasslands and wind-sculpted pockets of forest. A true high point is the incomparable vista from the tip of "Gorda 2." This is the most expansive coastal view in the King Range and encompasses over 110 miles of coastline from Cape Mendocino to Point Arena. The trail climbs from sea level to approximately 2,400 feet at Gorda 2 and again along Lake Ridge. The Cooskie Spur offers a descent to the beach at the midpoint of the route. A number of confusing intersections and stretches obscured by tall grass can make this route a challenge to follow, so bring along a map. Water is available at Cooskie Creek. Note that parts of the route adjoin private land, so respect owners' privacy. This is ranching country, so expect to see cattle grazing on the grass slopes.

Lost Coast Trail (North Segment)

Hugging the coast between the Mattole and Black Sands Beach recreation sites, this gem among American trails spans 25 miles of dramatic seascape. Although the trail is relatively level, it is still a challenging hike. Over half the route is on the beach, where you must traverse rocks and soft sand. The remainder of the trail climbs onto grassy marine terraces, which offer welcome breaks for your feet. Allow at least three days for the entire hike. Hike the coast from north to south to have the prevailing northwest winds at your back. Note that all coastal cabins are private and not open to the public. The creek mouths are the most popular campsites, and Buck and Shipman Creek can become overcrowded. Camp on the beach away from the creeks (and above the high tide line) to get away from full. Also, consider making your southern terminus the Horse Mountain Creek Trailhead, which has car and stock trailer parking. This will add diversity to your hike, and allow you to avoid the often full Black Sands Beach parking lot. There is no trailer or motorhome parking at Black Sands Beach. Through hikers should take Horse Mountain Creek Trail, King Peak Road, Shelter Cove Road, and Chemise Mountain Road to the Hidden Valley Trailhead to connect with the southern part of the trail. Water sources are plentiful.



Big Flat Creek from Rattlesnake Ridge Trail

Lost Coast Trail (South Segment)

This route packs in lots of variety as it climbs 1,500 feet and drops 2,700 feet on the way to Needle Rock. Starting from the Hidden Valley Trailhead, the route crosses grassy open meadows, then begins climbing Chemise Mountain. After passing an intersection with a spur trail climbing from the Walaki and Nadelos campgrounds, you reach the rounded chaparral-covered summit of Chemise Mountain (2,598 feet). Here openings along the ridge line offer views of the coast and the endless mountain ridges to the east. The trail crosses into Sinkyone Wilderness State Park. You cannot bring pets or mountain bikes on state park trails, and camping is only allowed in designated areas. The trail reaches the grassy coastal bluffs at Needle Rock Visitor Center. Here you can obtain state park information and permits. The Lost Coast Trail continues south for 19 miles ending at Usal Beach, passing towering redwood groves and secluded pocket beaches along the way.

Lightning Trail

The Lightning Trail is the shortest route to the summit of King Peak. The trail climbs a moderate, steady grade (1,900 feet), crossing a stretch of stately old growth Douglas-fir, before reaching windblown chaparral near the crest. Upon reaching the first intersection, you can choose from two routes of similar distance to reach King Peak. Take the left route to access Maple Camp, which offers several small tent spots and a spring set in a forested valley.

The vista spreading before you from 4,088-foot King Peak encompasses the entire coastline 90 miles south to Point Arena. Directly west, you are looking down the throat of Big Flat Creek to the ocean just 3 1/2 miles away. To the east march endless inland mountain ranges. The closest high peaks are the Yolla Bollys, while to the northeast you see the tips of the 9,000-foot snow-capped Trinity Alps.

Horse Mountain Creek Trail

This is the most gradual of the trails that connect the King Crest with the sea. It also has several water sources. The trail climbs about 300 feet and drops 1,700 feet between the Horse Mountain Creek Trailhead and the beach. Horse Mountain Creek Drainage and Queen Peak are visible through grassy openings in the forest before the route descends into a cool fern-shrouded tributary stream. The trail then climbs to a ridge line with a great view of the scalloped wave slope of Black Sands Beach. It finally drops onto the beach about 0.2 miles north of Horse Mountain Creek. This route is a great way to finish your Lost Coast trek.

King Crest Trail, North Segment

Straddling the spine of the most rugged part of the King Range, this trail offers a close-up view of the raw geologic forces that continue to shape these mountains. From the North Slide Peak Trailhead, the route climbs 1,900 feet and drops 900, feet offering alternating vistas of the Mattole Valley and the coastline. The many dead trees along the trail were burned by a series of lightning-caused fires in 1990. The Miller Loop drops off the crest 800 vertical feet to a level camping spot and spring set in an old-growth forest. Hike 0.2 miles up the dry creek bed to find Miller Spring. An 800-foot climb up the south half of the loop brings you back to the King Crest Trail. Continuing along the crest you finally reach the incomparable vista from King Peak (see Lightning Trail for view description).

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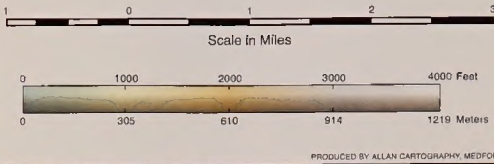
This segment of the King Crest Trail offers the most gradual climb to King Peak of all routes, rising 2,300 feet and descending 700 feet. From the Saddle Mountain Trailhead, the route threads its way up and down along the narrow crest, offering ever-changing coast and mountain views. The trail intersects with Lightning Trail, where you can take a side trip to a spring at Maple Camp, the only water source near the trail. The trail steepens on its climb until it reaches the panoramic vista from the summit of King Peak (see Lightning Trail for view description).

Trekking Tips

- Water is available year-round from coastal streams, but should always be purified before drinking. Water sources are scarce on the ridge-top trails, so carry plenty of water and note the spring locations (see map).
- Bring a tide table and always plan on hiking narrow stretches of the Lost Coast during an outgoing tide.
- No bridges are provided at stream crossings. Streams are only ankle deep in summer, but are much swifter during the rainy season, so be careful. Streams are impassable during and after heavy rains.
- Respect the wilderness setting along the coast and refrain from building new or adding to existing driftwood shelters.
- Remember...all back-country hikers must drink from creeks and springs. To keep the water clean:
  - Pack along a garden trowel and dig a 6- to 8-inch-deep "cathole" to deposit and bury your feces. Make sure you are at least 200 feet (70 paces) from streams. Do not burn your toilet paper.
  - When on the coast, dig your cathole in the sand well below the high tide line.
  - Carry water for bathing and washing dishes away from streams and springs, and discard wastewater well away from streams.
- To keep your backpack from becoming a wildlife restaurant, bring animal-proof containers if you're hiking the coast (where trees are hard to come by) or rope to hang your food in trees on upland trails.
- Pack out all trash and food scraps. Do not bury them, as this attracts rodents and snakes to campsites.
- Remember, you are one of thousands of visitors to the Lost Coast. Set a Trend: Leave No Trace!

LEGEND

- Town
- Trailhead
- Back Country Camp Site
- Recreation Site
- Elevation in Feet
- Gate
- BLM Land Boundary
- Paved Roads
- Unpaved Roads
- Unimproved Roads — 4WD, high clearance vehicles recommended
- Hiking Trails, open only to non-motorized use
- Distance between triangles in miles
- Lighthouse
- Information
- Lodging
- Food Service
- Grocery Store
- Telephone
- Gas Station
- Tent Sites
- Trailer, Tent Sites
- Wildlife Viewing Area
- Hiking Trail
- Horse Trailheads
- Picnic Area
- Campfire Permits
- Coastal Access
- Launching Ramp
- Trailer Sanitary Station



King Range Information Line: (707) 825-2300 [www.ca.blm.gov/arcata](http://www.ca.blm.gov/arcata)  
BLM Arcata Field Office  
1695 Heindon Road  
Arcata, CA 95521  
BLM King Range Project Office  
768 Shelter Cove Road  
Whitethorn, CA 95589  
(707) 986-5400  
Garberville/Redway Chamber of Commerce... (707) 923-2613  
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Ferdale Chamber of Commerce... (707) 786-4477  
[www.victorianferdale.org/chamber](http://www.victorianferdale.org/chamber)  
EMERGENCY NUMBER: 911



# THE LOST COAST KING RANGE NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

## From Summit to Sea, Back Country Trails...

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Big Flat Creek from Rattlesnake Ridge Trail

### King Crest Trail, North Segment

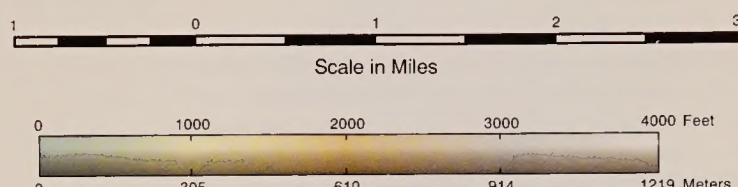
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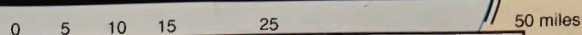
# LEGEND

- |                           |                       |                            |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| ○ Town                    | 🏠 Lighthouse          | 🦋 Wildlife Viewing Area    |
| 📍 Trailhead               | ❓ Information         | 🥾 Hiking Trail             |
| ⚖️ Back Country Camp Site | 🏠 Lodging             | 🐎 Horse Trailheads         |
| ■ Recreation Site         | 🍽️ Food Service       | 🏕️ Picnic Area             |
| △ 2200 Elevation in Feet  | 🛒 Grocery Store       | 🔥 Campfire Permits         |
| 🚰 Gate                    | ☎️ Telephone          | 🌊 Coastal Access           |
|                           | ⛽ Gas Station         | 🚤 Launching Ramp           |
|                           | 🏕️ Tent Sites         | 🚻 Trailer Sanitary Station |
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- ===== Paved Roads  
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 ----- Hiking Trails, open only to non-motorized use  
 2.1 Distance between triangles in miles



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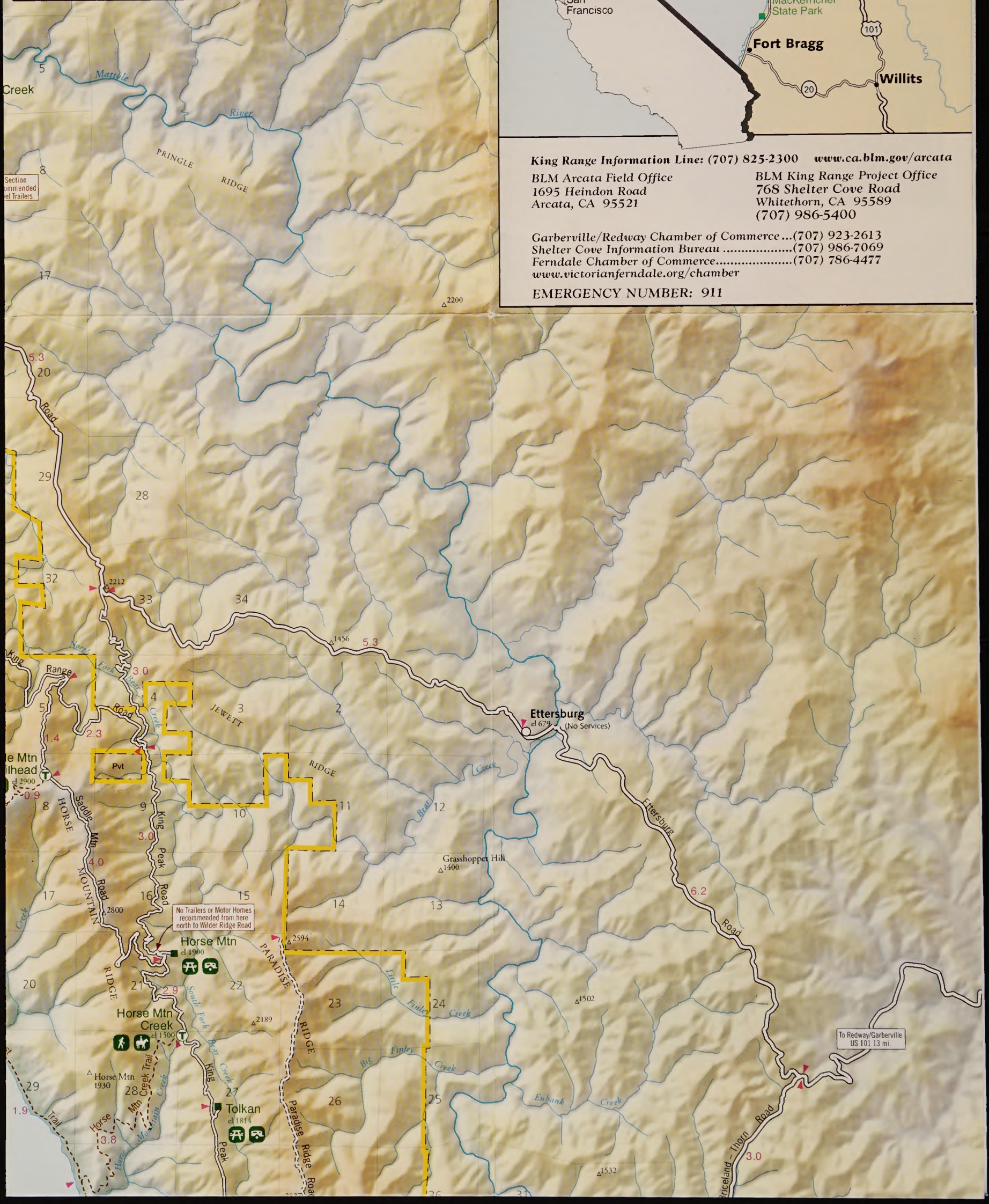
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Crossing Randall Creek, Lost Coast Trail

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This extremely challenging but rewarding route plunges 3,500 feet from the King Range Crest to the coast. Beginning at the coast north of Big Flat Creek, you follow the creek until reaching the first major fork. From here, follow the south fork of the creek. This lower section of trail changes each year with winter floods and downed trees, so you may have to do some rock-hopping and bushwhacking along the wide creek channel. The sheltered valley is lush, with ferns and mosses covering the rocks and trees. Leaving the creek canyon, you climb up a seemingly endless series of switchbacks until reaching the fire-scarred brushy nose of Rattlesnake Ridge. Here the vistas open, with King Peak looming above and the broad outwash of Big Flat Creek below. You'll find a spring and flat area for tents at Bear Hollow Camp before the route reaches the King Crest Trail.

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### Lost Coast Trail (South Segment)

This route packs in lots of variety as it climbs 1,500 feet and drops 2,700 feet on the way to Needle Rock. Starting from the Hidden Valley Trailhead, the route crosses grassy open meadows, then begins climbing Chemise Mountain. After passing an intersection with a spur trail climbing from the Walaki and Nadelos campgrounds, you reach the rounded chaparral-covered summit of Chemise Mountain (2,598 feet). Here openings along the ridge line offer views of the coast and the endless mountain ridges to the east. The trail crosses into Sinkyone Wilderness State Park. You cannot bring pets or mountain bikes on state park trails, and camping is only allowed in designated areas. The trail reaches the grassy coastal bluffs at Needle Rock Visitor Center. Here you can obtain state park information and permits. The Lost Coast Trail continues south for 19 miles ending at Usal Beach, passing towering redwood groves and secluded pocket beaches along the way.

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- Bring a tide table and always plan on hiking narrow stretches of the Lost Coast during an outgoing tide.
- No bridges are provided at stream crossings. Streams are only ankle deep in summer, but are much swifter during the rainy season, so be careful. Streams are impassable during and after heavy rains.
- Respect the wilderness setting along the coast and refrain from building new or adding to existing driftwood shelters.
- Remember...all back-country hikers must drink from creeks and springs. To keep the water clean:
  - Pack along a garden trowel and dig a 6- to 8-inch-deep "cathole" to deposit and bury your feces. Make sure you are at least 200 feet (70 paces) from streams. Do not burn your toilet paper.
  - When on the coast, dig your cathole in the sand well below the high tide line.
  - Carry water for bathing and washing dishes away from streams and springs, and discard wastewater well away from streams.
- To keep your backpack from becoming a wildlife restaurant, bring animal-proof containers if you're hiking the coast (where trees are hard to come by) or rope to hang your food in trees on upland trails.
- Pack out all trash and food scraps. Do not bury them, as this attracts rodents and snakes to campsites.
- Remember, you are one of thousands of visitors to the Lost Coast. Set a Trend: Leave No Trace!



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